

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A key maintenance method comprising:
  - maintaining, in a datastore, a first-level access key that grants, to a medical service provider, a level of access to a set of medical records of a patient;
  - retrieving the first-level access key; and
  - generating a second-level access key by modifying the level of access of the first-level access key.
2. The key maintenance method of claim 1 wherein:
  - the levels of access of the first-level and second-level access keys are defined using one or more access parameters;
  - the set of medical records is a multi-portion medical record; and
  - the access parameters provide access to one or more portions of the set of medical records.
3. The key maintenance method of claim 1 further comprising transmitting the second-level access key to the medical service provider, wherein the medical service provider subsequently stores the second-level access key on an MSP key repository assigned to the medical service provider.
4. The key maintenance method of claim 1 further comprising storing the second-level access key in the datastore.
5. The key maintenance method of claim 4 further comprising deleting the first-level access key from the datastore.
6. The key maintenance method of claim 4 wherein the datastore is a patient key repository assigned to the patient.

7. The key maintenance method of claim 6 wherein the first-level access key was previously-provided to the medical service provider and previously-stored on an MSP key repository assigned to the medical service provider.
8. The key maintenance method of claim 7 wherein:
  - the patient key repository is a first portion of a centralized key repository;
  - and
  - the MSP key repository is a second portion of the centralized key repository.
9. The key maintenance method of claim 8 wherein the centralized key repository resides on and is executed by a remote server connected to a distributed computing network.
10. The key maintenance method of claim 9 wherein:
  - the remote server is a web server; and
  - the distributed computing network is the Internet.
11. The key maintenance method of claim 7 further comprising reconciling the patient key repository and the MSP key repository.
12. The key maintenance method of claim 11 wherein reconciling includes overwriting the first-level access key stored within the MSP key repository with the second-level access key stored in the patient key repository.
13. The key maintenance method of claim 1 wherein the second-level access key enhances the level of access of the first level access key, wherein the medical service provider is granted a greater level of access to the set of medical records of the patient.
14. The key maintenance method of claim 1 wherein the second-level access key reduces the level of access of the first level access key, wherein the medical service provider is granted a reduced level of access to the set of medical records of the patient.

15. The key maintenance method of claim 1 wherein the second-level access key revokes the level of access of the first level access key, wherein the medical service provider is prohibited from accessing the set of medical records of the patient.

16. A key maintenance method comprising:
  - maintaining, in a datastore, a first-level access key that grants, to a medical service provider, a level of access to a set of medical records of a patient;
  - retrieving the first-level access key;
  - generating a second-level access key by modifying the level of access of the first-level access key; and
  - deleting the first-level access key from the datastore
17. The key maintenance method of claim 16 wherein the datastore is a patient key repository assigned to the patient.
18. The key maintenance method of claim 17 wherein the first-level access key was previously-provided to the medical service provider and previously-stored on an MSP key repository assigned to the medical service provider.
19. The key maintenance method of claim 18 wherein:
  - the patient key repository is a first portion of a centralized key repository;
  - and
  - the MSP key repository is a second portion of the centralized key repository.
20. The key maintenance method of claim 19 wherein the centralized key repository resides on and is executed by a remote server connected to a distributed computing network.
21. The key maintenance method of claim 20 wherein:
  - the remote server is a web server; and
  - the distributed computing network is the Internet.

22. A key maintenance system comprising:
- a server system including a computer processor and associated memory, the server system having a centralized key repository and a centralized medical record repository;
  - wherein the server system is configured to:
    - maintain, in a datastore, a first-level access key that grants, to a medical service provider, a level of access to a set of medical records of a patient;
    - retrieve the first-level access key; and
    - generate a second-level access key by modifying the level of access of the first-level access key.
23. The key maintenance system of claim 22 wherein the server system is further configured to store the second-level access key in the datastore.
24. The key maintenance system of claim 23 wherein the datastore is a patient key repository assigned to the patient.
25. The key maintenance system of claim 24 wherein the first-level access key was previously-provided to the medical service provider and previously-stored on an MSP key repository assigned to the medical service provider.
26. The key maintenance system of claim 25 wherein:
- the patient key repository is a first portion of a centralized key repository;
  - and
  - the MSP key repository is a second portion of the centralized key repository.
27. The key maintenance system of claim 26 wherein the centralized key repository resides on and is executed by a remote server connected to a distributed computing network.

28. The key maintenance system of claim 27 wherein:
- the remote server is a web server; and
  - the distributed computing network is the Internet.

30. A computer program product residing on a computer readable medium having a plurality of instructions stored thereon which, when executed by the processor, cause that processor to:

maintain, in a datastore, a first-level access key that grants, to a medical service provider, a level of access to a set of medical records of a patient;  
retrieve the first-level access key; and  
generate a second-level access key by modifying the level of access of the first-level access key.

31. The computer program product of claim 30 further comprising instructions for storing the second-level access key in the datastore.

32. The computer program product of claim 30 further comprising instructions for deleting the first-level access key from the datastore.

33. The computer program product of claim 30 wherein the datastore is a patient key repository assigned to the patient.

34. The computer program product of claim 33 wherein the first-level access key was previously-provided to the medical service provider and previously-stored on an MSP key repository assigned to the medical service provider.

35. The computer program product of claim 34 further comprising instructions for reconciling the patient key repository and the MSP key repository.

36. The computer program product of claim 35 wherein the instructions for reconciling include instructions for overwriting the first-level access key stored within the MSP key repository with the second-level access key stored in the patient key repository.